

Recycle Right: Plastic Bags Don't Belong in the Recycling Bin

Pete Howard, Arlington Recycling Committee

The JRM plant in Peabody handles the materials we put on the curb for recycling every week. The plant is huge. It is equipped with an impressive variety of conveyor belts and rollers. The material is sorted by weight using air jets, by material using magnets, by size using screens, by shape using ramps of rollers. Workers supplement the machines. Unfortunately the machines do not handle plastic sheeting, especially plastic shopping bags, well. This material gets tangled in the moving parts of the machines. The entire process must be shut down to clear the tangles.

Why should we care? Because shut downs reduce the recycling efficiency. The plant output is reduced and so, of course will be JRM's earnings. This will be reflected in the cost the Town will pay for hauling away both our trash & our recycling. We pay more than \$2,000,000 a year for this service. It behooves us to increase JRM's efficiency.

So please keep plastic bags and similar plastic sheet materials out of your curbside recycling containers. These materials can be recycled by putting them in the bin inside the entrance to Stop & Shop and Whole Foods. The companies truck them to a dealer who bales them and ships them to Trex where the plastic is made into durable outdoor deck boards. For more about what should and should not be recycled, consult the guide provided annually to every home by the Public Works Department or go to www.town.arlington.ma.us, press the Recycling & Trash button and then the Download Recycling & Trash Guide button.

Arlington Recycling Committee welcomes your involvement as a recycler, as a volunteer at recycling events, or as a committee member. Information can be found at arlingtonma.gov/recycling, or use Town's Request/Answer page. Select "Ask a Question" and choose the "Recycling" category so your question is routed to Arlington's Recycling Coordinator.